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Cover photo of the Great Wall of China taken by Florinda Mallen.

Letter from the Editors

Thank you for picking up the latest issue of the Jackson School Journal of International Studies. This Autumn 2017 issue highlights research and interviews conducted by JSIS undergraduates at the University of Washington. We are proud to feature a policy analysis of China's hukou system, the national household registry, and its effect on economic inequality between rural and urban communities in the Shandong Province. The article, "Beyond the Hukou Barrier: Systemic Inequalities in Shandong Province" by Nicholas Steele, examines demographic and economic trends to highlight growing social and financial instability, and proposes policy reforms that align with China's economic transition.

In our Expert Insights section, you will find interviews with three dynamic and fascinating individuals. Duzen Tekkal is a German journalist, filmmaker, author, and war correspondent who has worked to document the experiences of the Yazidi people at the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq. She has received awards for human rights activism and journalism, and shared her story with us. Vanessa Freije is a new professor in the Jackson School, and we discussed her developing career and experiences leading up to her joining the University of Washington faculty. She explains her interests in Latin America, ideas of democracy, and the effect of political scandals and corruption. Our last interviewee, Valerie Mueller, is a Senior Research Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and an Assistant Professor at Arizona State University. She has worked with migration and poverty dynamics, and the effects of climate variations in developing countries. We spoke about her research and her advice for those interested in the field.

We would like to thank the returning members of our editorial board for sharing their expertise with us once again for this Issue: Emily Ferguson, Thomas Zadrozny, and Hayley Zhu. We also extend a warm welcome to our newest members: Claire Bacon, David Kirichenko, Angelia Miranda, Nerissa Morrow, and Alex Wirth. We are excited to see how the Journal will continue to be shaped by our members as the year goes on. This quarter, we are debuting our work on our new website, <https://jsis.washington.edu/jsjournal/>. We invite you to check it out, and see how far the Journal has come since its inception in 2009. Even as editorial board members graduate and the field of international studies changes, we remain committed to supporting peer-reviewed publication for undergraduate research, interviews, book reviews, and more.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our faculty who were extremely generous with time and advice. Without them the publication process would not be possible. We are so grateful for the dedication and talents of our student authors, peer reviewers, and editors.

We invite you to turn the page and discover the ideas and hard work of the whole Jackson School Journal of International Studies team.

Sincerely,

Kaia Boonzaier, Bella Brown, and Rachel Pollard
Editors-in-Chief



This issue of the Jackson School Journal is dedicated to Professor Vanessa Freije, for her time spent working with the journal and supporting our Expert Insights section for this issue. We are grateful for her support and excited for our future work with her in the Jackson School.



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Nicholas Steele

Beyond the Hukou Barrier

Systemic Inequalities in Shandong Province

China's hukou system, the national household registry, renders society into the urban-haves and the rural have-nots. The hukou functions as an arbiter of entitlements by granting holders of urban status the benefit of public education, pensions, and healthcare, among other services that are lacking for rural-hukou holders. I argue that the hukou system is the chief barrier to reforming China's economy towards a high-skill, high-wage model. This essay examines the inequalities stemming from the rural-urban divide within the scope of Shandong Province. Emblematic of China's macroeconomic restructuring, Shandong Province is viewed as the bellwether for similar eastern coastal provinces leading market-oriented economic reform. By looking at demographic trends, lifestyle data from China's 2014 census, and a variety of economic figures, I build an empirical picture of inequality in Shandong Province. With data from the China Labour Bulletin, I highlight the growing social instability emanating from the outgrowth of the hukou's system: rural-migrant labor. Moving forward, I propose three policy reforms that align with China's transition into an equitable economy.

In a 2014 speech by Premier Li Keqiang, China's model for development took an unexpected turn. Contrary to the expectations of those skeptical of China's reform-oriented regime, the Premier detailed a vision of a 21st century in striking rhetoric. The next decade, the Premier claimed, would include "raising personal income... strengthening the social safety net, and continually improving people's livelihoods."¹ Li asserted that wealth was just one of three desires of the Chinese, along with "a richer cultural life and social justice."² The emergence of social values as the prerogative for development marks a turning point in China's model of growth. For decades since the country's opening-up, China's leaders have underscored the Communist Party's pledge for economic growth, yet rarely made commitments to justice and culture. With these words, the

Premier broke from tradition. Nevertheless, just twelve days after the Premier's speech, one hundred workers protested in Shandong Province demanding better wages and social security. Their protest is evidence of Beijing's negligence regarding welfare policy reform. This was not an isolated event. By the end of 2014 there were 85 protests in Shandong, demonstrating a growing trend among the province's workers. Unrest is palpable in the factories of coastal cities and is fueled by rising expectations and demand for accountability from the government.³

This paper focuses on Shandong Province, where a socioeconomic system approaches a liminal moment in reform. As China adjusts to a slower domestic and global

1. Li Keqiang, "Upgrading China's Development Model," *Huffington Post/Berggruen Institute*, February 10.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "Worker unrest in Shandong on the rise as economy slows," *China Labour Bulletin*. August 5 2015.

economy, the varying strands of Shandong society will face a formidable disruption of the status quo. From a state-led investment strategy towards an economy sustained by household consumption, Shandong is at the forefront of the extensive rebalancing of China's economic model. Shandong's relatively well-established urban middle class, 49 million, signals an economy driven by consumer spending, a direction spearheaded in the Chinese Communist Party's Third Plenum reform blueprint.⁴ At the same time, Shandong faces obstacles in modernizing. I argue that the most significant is the systemic rural-urban divide galvanized by the household registration system or hukou system. In the short-term, the hukou system impedes full-citizenship and, in the long-term, will obstruct the province's economic potential.⁵ While Shandong's top-tier cities like Qingdao and Jinan host a sizable population employed in the private sector, on the periphery of these urban centers is a large, floating population of rural migrant workers laboring in factories. Because of the administrative limitations imposed by the hukou system this large community has little access to housing, schooling, health care and other important resources that might ensure the possibility of some upward mobility for themselves or their children. They live on the margins of the cityscape working under brutal conditions, and contribute little to China's long-term economic growth. The split in modern Shandong – characterized by the dichotomy between urban and rural hukou ranking – is an image of a broader Chinese pattern, and threatens to undercut China's next phase in socioeconomic development.

This paper details the implications of the social and economic structure in Shandong for the future of Shandong's citizens' well-being. Even though there

is a vibrant technology sector, much of Shandong's economy derives its product from government investments in low-wage, labor-intensive industries. This dependence is unsustainable; a shift towards highly productive sectors and robust social services will unlock considerable economic potential. The hybridization of Shandong's two societies together represents the coterminous trajectories of China's economic growth. This essay argues that at the core of Shandong's current economy is the marginalization of rural migrant labor and this feature is a barrier towards developing a sustainable economy. Furthermore, the rural-urban division is a chief impediment to expanding the middle class, a class crucial for Shandong's social and economic growth. Additionally, as sustaining China enters its "New Normal" phase of economic growth, the second generation of rural migrant labor will be a primary threat to social stability. In conclusion, I propose three policy recommendations to redress the inequalities resulting from the hukou system.

Shandong Province is emblematic of China's most recent era of economic modernization.⁶ In 1978, Deng Xiaoping's 'opening-up' of China to international trade transformed Shandong, turning an agrarian province into a heavily industrialized zone. At Shandong's nascent stage of industrialization, 82 percent of the population lived as rural peasants working in intensive agriculture practices.⁷ But Shandong soon modernized, becoming a leading exporter of machinery to markets

4. Yi Fan, Junjian Yi, Junsen Zhang, "The Great Gatsby Curve in China: Cross-Sectional Inequality and Intergenerational Mobility," *The London School of Economics and Political Science*. 2010 pp. 62-109

5. Kam Wing Chan, "Migration and development in China: trends, geography and current issues," *Migration and Development* 1 no.2 2012: 187-205

6. Patricia Buckley Ebrey, "Four Modernizations Era." *A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization*. University of Washington. 2010.

in northeast Asia by the twentieth century.⁸

Thanks to its location on China's northeastern coast, Shandong Province stands at the center of northeast Asian commerce.⁹ Shandong's coastline stretches three-thousand kilometers and includes several deep-water ports, affording access to international trade and investment. Japan and South Korea are both importers of Shandong's goods and investors in Shandong's manufacturing industry, bringing new technologies to Shandong companies.¹⁰ By 2012, according to data from the International Monetary Fund, Shandong was growing at a rate of 9.8% GDP, with an output of 793.86 billion USD. This growth significantly raised the standards of living for millions as employment and wages grew.¹¹

Overall, the three-decade long growth trajectory of Shandong Province represents the economic trajectory of modern China. Economic and political reforms spearheaded Shandong's renewal. But now Shandong confronts an obstacle barring the province's complete shift to a high-income, consumer-driven economy. The great barrier to Shandong's transition is the existing structure of the country's socioeconomic system: the hukou classification of the rural migrant workers.

Inseparable from Shandong's impressive economic growth was a massive reorganization of society. Millions of rural peasants migrated to factory jobs seeking to benefit from endless quotas for manufacturing, mining, and construction positions. Shandong's model of development relies on labor intensive, low wage jobs.¹² Cheap labor ensured that Shandong's exports had a competitive edge: low labor costs benchmark the "China Price." Shandong's comparative advantage of abundant, cheap labor cemented a society that relies on disproportionate rates of

household savings and state financed growth to fuel massive state spending.¹³ Meager wages mean that Shandong's laborers cannot afford to consume very much.

This model has a deadline that is fast-approaching. The China Model for growth undermines the limited rights of rural migrant workers, unnaturally alters demographic trends, stifles business competition, and, critically, hinders productivity growth. The overall size of China's economic pie is constrained by an economic model reliant on government investments in low-level production. Expanding the total size of the pie requires growth in labor productivity, a measurement that captures the ability of a workforce to leverage resources to generate greater output.¹⁴ Although labor productivity increases with an expansion in quantitative factors such as hours worked and size of the labor force, the qualitative dimension is even more essential for Shandong. The size of the labor pool and the hours spent in factories are diminishing in their returns. To continue to grow,

7. Wei Wei Siau, Sarah Xiao, and Xiaoming Liu, "Nominal GDP Shandong 1998-2012," in *Economic Overview of Shandong Province* (Netherlands Economic Network in China, 2014), 8.

8. China Statistical Yearbook. "6-8 Main Export Commodities in Volume and Value." Compiled by National Bureau of Statistics of China. 2012.

9. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts of Cochin-China, Siam, and Muscat*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837.

10. Siau et al., "Nominal GDP Shandong 1998-2012."

11. International Monetary Fund, "People's Republic of China 2015 Article IV Consultation—Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for the Peoples Republic of China." *IMF Country Report* 234, no. 15 (August 2015); Peter Hilsenrath. "Why China's economic slowdown is good news for the middle class," *The Conversation* 15 October 2015.

12. Yuan Zhang, Wan Guanghua, and Niny Khor, "The Rise of the Middle Class in the People's Republic of China," *Asian Development Bank Economics Working Paper Series*, no. 247 (February 2011).

13. Robert C. Feenstra and Shang-Jin Wei, "Introduction to "Cina's Growing Role in World Trade," *NBER Working Paper* No. 14716. 2009.

14. Zhang et al., "The Rise of the Middle Class in the People's Republic of China."

Shandong must increase the skill of the labor force to stimulate productivity growth.¹⁵ Investing in human capital, by expanding access to education and technology for rural

“To continue to grow, Shandong must increase the skill of the labor force to stimulate productivity growth.”

migrants, is the chief method for growing a high-skill labor force. But Shandong’s household registration, the hukou system, suppresses investments in human capital while inciting social instability among second generation rural migrant laborers.¹⁶

Within Shandong, the hukou registration system institutionalizes inequality and maintains the marginalization of the rural underclass as central to the province’s economic model.¹⁷ Functioning like an “internal passport,” the hukou was an instrument used by Mao Zedong to regulate the movement of rural and urban bodies, tethering populations to their registered residence. The restrictions on labor movement forced rural hukou holders to work on farms, allowing urban populations access to higher paying jobs in state-run enterprises and entitlements.¹⁸ Hukou status, whether a family is classified as “rural” or “urban”, determines their access to employment and entitlements such as housing, healthcare, and education.¹⁹ Strong control over rural-urban migration ensures a surplus of rural peasant labor to maintain a smaller, privileged urban class.

Over the decades the hukou

system evolved with a wave of urban industrialization, stimulated by state and foreign investment. The privatization of agriculture reduced the need for rural workers and at the same time hired work quotes expanded in new urban factories. China’s market-driven reforms prioritized coastal cities with access to ports. Money flowed into manufacturing and directly bolstered Shandong’s industrial economy. Demand for factory labor increased, causing the first major reform to the hukou system in the late 1980s. Rural labor was permitted to migrate into urban areas to supply the demand for low-cost, expendable labor.²⁰ It was during this period that Shandong’s core industrial cities, Jinan and Qingdao, received high levels of inter- and intra-provincial migration.²¹ The migrating population between 1985 and 1990 formed the core of Jinan and Qingdao’s supply of factory labor, with the vast majority seeking employment in construction and heavy industry.²² The ‘3-D’ (dangerous, dirty, and demeaning) labor sector quickly became populated by rural hukou holders.²³

Despite living and working in cities, migrants from rural areas remain classified as “rural” citizens. Under the hukou system

15. Jacob Mincer, “Human Capital and Economic Growth,” *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 803*. November 1981.

16. James. J. Heckman, Junjian Yi, “Human Capital, Economics Growth, and Inequality in China,” *NBER Working Paper No. 18100*. 2012

17. Thomas W. Hertel, Fan Zhai, Wang Zhi, “Labor Market Distortions, Rural-Urban Inequality, and the Opening of China’s Economy,” *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3455*. 10 November, 2004.

18. Hertel et al., “Labor Market Distortions, Rural-Urban equality, and the Opening of China’s Economy.”

19. Chen Jia Ching, “Hukou: Labor, Property, and Urban-Rural Inequalities,” *Factory Towns in South China*, edited by S. Al, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press) 2013. 32-34.

20. Fang Cai, “Recent Trends of Population Migration in Shandong,” *Cologne China Studies Online*, no. 10.

21. Cai, “Recent Trends of Population Migration in Shandong.”

22. *Ibid.*

23. “3-4 Population at Year-end by Region,” *China Statistical Yearbook*, 2012,

Shandong's rural migrant hukou status excludes families from access to housing, education, welfare, and social services, nullifying upward mobility. Because social services are tied to hukou status, Shandong's migrant laborer population composes a large sector in society not receiving welfare services from the government, undermining the assumed benefits of urbanization.²⁴ A recent study shows that only five percent of rural migrant laborers were covered by unemployment insurance, three percent had access to medical insurance, and 15 percent had a pension.²⁵ Additionally, rural migrant children are excluded from public education in cities. Estimates suggest that there are seven to eight million migrant children living in cities, a staggering figure considering the likelihood of these children not receiving an education. Restrictions on childhood education not only diminishes inter-generational mobility but creates long term rural-urban inequalities, especially with the rural population's youthful demographics.²⁶ The prospect of intergenerational mobility is grim.²⁷ As policy stands in Shandong, children of rural migrant labor have little opportunity to gain a meaningful education and navigate a pathway out of poverty.²⁸ Thus, underpinning Shandong's industrial ascendancy are systemic inequalities between rural and urban populations that fracture social stability and threaten long-term economic growth.

Further evidence of Shandong's stark inequality is the difference in the per capita disposable income of rural and urban households. Urban households average a net-income of 30,628 yuan (or 195,300 USD in 2017), nearly three times larger than the average rural household income of 10,619 yuan (67,716 USD in 2017).²⁹ This translates into urban households having disposable incomes four times larger. Household

spending data from the China Statistical Yearbook shows that the majority income of rural households in Shandong goes to basic living needs: expenses for food and housing take up more than half the average income, leaving a meagre amount for education and healthcare.³⁰ The contrast between urban-rural expenditures on education is telling, as urban households in Shandong spend nearly three times more on education compared to their rural counterparts.³¹ This compounds the systemic barriers to state-sponsored education faced by rural hukou holders.

The restrictions on Shandong's rural migrant laborers create a potential threat to social and political stability stemming from unemployment.³² Rural migrant labor shoulder the brunt of the burden of the restructuring of China's economy, as it adjusts to an economy that grows at a slower pace and is less dependent on factory production. Unskilled and uneducated, rural migrants are most vulnerable to the subsequent economic slowdown and the first to face unemployment. Shandong's coastal factories are not only vulnerable to larger economic trends effecting demand for China's exports, but also to changes in

24. Kam Wing Chan, "What is the True Urban Population of China? Which is the Largest City in China?" *Urbanization of China*, January 2009.

25. John Giles, Albert Park, and Dewen Wang, *Expanding Social Insurance Coverage in Urban China*. Policy Research Working Papers. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2013.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Fan et al., "The Great Gatsby Curve in China: Cross-Sectional Inequality and Intergenerational Mobility."

28. Athar Hussain and Youjuan Wang, "Rural-Urban Migration in China: Scale, Composition, Pattern and Deprivation," in *Marginalization in Urban China: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Wu, F and Webster, S. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

29. China Statistical Yearbook. 2014.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Zhang et al., "The Rise of the Middle Class in the People's Republic of China."

32. Shuaizhang Feng, Yingyao Hu, Robert Moffitt, "Long run trends in unemployment and labor force participation in urban China." *Journal of Comparative Economics*. 2017.

the country's development policy. Economic stagnation within the developed economies diminishes demand for China's exports, while the oversupply of factory production within Shandong causes governments to close down state-owned enterprises.³³

For Shandong's policy makers, the imperative is to replace the current capital-driven growth with a model sustained by high-skill high-wage labor, eventually letting the markets play a decisive role.³⁴ Indeed, in the long-term, this adjustment is critical for Shandong's stability and prosperity, encouraging market competition, capital compensation, and higher productivity. But efforts to reform Shandong's economy hit hardest laborers in industrial cities, giving rise to worker protests.³⁵ In 2015, 63 percent of all protests in Shandong correlated with worker clashes in manufacturing and construction industries.³⁶ Strikes in Shandong's Tengzhou and Jining, captured the unrest resulting from unemployment as thousands of migrant workers marched from Feicheng to the provincial capital Jinan in protest.³⁷

Labor unrest in Shandong highlights how the hukou system drives social instability. As young migrants inherit their social and legal "rural" identity, the new generation is heir to the systemic discrimination imbedded in the hukou system. Unique among the second and third generation of migrant laborers is that they demand more than higher wages from factories. They demand a voice in civil affairs, representation in local government, and an increased degree of government accountability.³⁸ A rise in labor strikes represents a generational shift in Shandong's industrial cities as the children of rural migrant laborers enter the workforce and act on their desires for change.³⁹

Because rural migrants are concentrated in laboring enclaves, they

can network with peers resulting in a surge of worker protests. Shandong's migrant labor – young and alienated – presents a potent threat to government control over society. The ease of mobilizing labor protests through social media apps like WeChat and Weibo presents unprecedented power of disaffected youth.⁴⁰ From December 2011 to 2013 there were 470 strikes by factory workers, accounting for nearly half of all worker protests in China during same period. The majority of Shandong's protests centered around migrant workers' demand for wage arrears,

"Unskilled and uneducated, rural migrants are most vulnerable to the subsequent economic slowdown and the first to face unemployment."

a recent trend of China's slow growth.⁴¹ A swell of factory and mine closures in the North are leaving hundreds of thousands of rural-migrant laborers unemployed, portending a significant issue for Shandong's local government and growing unrest in China's rebalancing economy.⁴²

33. Ibid.

34. Stephen Roach, "China risks hobbling its economic development with too many policy goals," *South China Morning Post*, January 6, 2014. 36. "Worker unrest in Shandong on the rise as economy slows," *China Labour Bulletin*.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. "Searching the Union: the worker's movement in China 2011-13," *China Labour Bulletin*. February 2014. Pp. 4-46.

38. Kam Wing Chan, "The Household Registration System and Migrant Labor in China: Notes on a Debate" *Population and Development Review* 36 no.2 June 2010: 357-364.

39. "Searching the Union: the worker's movement in China 2011-13," *China Labour Bulletin*.

40. "Worker unrest in Shandong on the rise as economy slows," *China Labour Bulletin*.

42. Ibid.

Yet, this problem rarely registers in government policies. Rural-migrant laborers in Shandong's cities exist as sub-citizens: cheap, expendable, and lacking political clout. Removing the boundaries between rural and urban laborers is imperative in Shandong's rebalancing of the economy, and the full urban residence status should be granted to rural hukou holders. For full liberalization to occur in Shandong, institutional restrictions on citizenship should be revoked. A second-tier population will undermine efforts to stimulate household spending, just as it constructs social instability. Rural migrant laborers earn less but are expected to pay the high cost of living in the city, so many live in slum-like conditions at the peripheries. However, with policy changes, an emergent migrant labor middle-class could become the driver of China's "new normal."⁴³

Shandong's complete shift to a sustainable economy requires policy changes to the hukou system. No doubt, there are significant barriers for political action. The urban middle class are the chief stakeholders in maintaining the status quo, bearing enduring social stigmas against the rural migrants. This is compounded by the better treatment received by the urban class from local government in terms of social services, voice in political affairs, and local government recruitment deepening the urban class loyalty. Simply put, the hukou system is instrumental in maintaining support from the urban class while pitting deeply vested interests against the disenfranchised rural class.⁴⁴ One real danger is maintaining this system for too long, risking permanently embedding systemic inequality in urban life.⁴⁵ The local and national government should recognize the importance of reforming the hukou system sooner than later, as the cost of

inaction increases significantly over time as hukou ideas and outcomes become more and more embedded. It is fortunate that the party is taking strident steps to restructure their economy away from an export-driven towards a consumer-driven model. This aligns directly with the hukou system reforms.

Recognizing the need for systemic reform, China's leaders have committed themselves to large-scale urbanization through hukou liberalization. In 2016, Premier Li Keqiang claimed that the next five years would be pivotal for the country's hukou reform, promising a vision of "orderly" rural-to-urban migration.⁴⁶ He promised that the country will grant migrant workers the opportunity to become urban residents "in an orderly way." And by 2020, the phase-out of the hukou system would be complete.⁴⁷ The overarching theme of Premier Li's policy proposal mirrored President Xi's vision for China's economic reform: gradual liberalization. Recognizing that maintaining the status quo could be disastrous, but rapid change may be equally destabilizing, China's leading policy makers seek to limit the downsides to unrestricted mass-flow of people, a common fear shared among urban residents.⁴⁸ The scale of this proposal is huge. China's leaders aim to urbanize 60 percent of its 1.4 billion population, loosening hukou restrictions and broadening the welfare net.⁴⁹

While challenges to this reform are

43. Arthur R Kroeber, "Xi Jinping's Ambitious Agenda for Economic Reform in China." *Brookings Institute*, November 17, 2013.

44. Hussain and Wang, "Rural-Urban Migration in China: Scale, Composition, Pattern and Deprivation." 114-23.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Shannon Tiezzi, "China's Plan for 'Orderly' Hukou Reform." *The Diplomat*, February 3, 2016.

47. Jianfeng Zhang, "China Focus: Hukou reforms to help 100 mln Chinese." *Xinhua*, July 30, 2014.

48. Ankit Panda, "China Announces Limited Hukou Reform," *The Diplomat*, July 31, 2014.

49. Reuters Staff, "China says to ensure "orderly" rural-urban migration," *Reuters*, July 29, 2014.

numerous, the most substantial come from local municipal leaders. Free migration would likely add to the problems inundating urban China: “traffic gridlock, deteriorating air and water quality, and dilapidated buildings,” according to Xu Xiaoshi, head of China’s influential National Development and Reform Commission.⁵⁰ This is a reasonable concern; cities have a varied ability to absorb migrants and support a growing demand for public services.

To placate urban populations and municipalities, China’s authorities plan to limit urban migration based on qualities of the individual and their destination. For small and medium cities the government will fully remove or ease restrictions on residency, encouraging urbanization within China’s landlocked and less urban provinces. The restrictions on “megacities” are more onerous. The 2014 State Council report writes that since cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen “face a lot population pressure, with an annual floating population of hundreds of thousands,” migrants planning to settle in top-tier cities must qualify under a “point based system.” According to this criterion, a migrant will score high if they are educated, successful in their job, young, and single, or in other words, a low-cost to a municipality.⁵¹ Setting a threshold based on a cursory cost-benefit analysis of a prospective resident is controversial, but its aim is to effectively allocate scarce resources for education, health care, and housing. Equally important, the government must manage the mismatch between labor supply and industry demand within coastal cities as factories shut down and unemployment rises. This transition will be made more difficult as the government commits itself to urbanization, despite the diminishing employment prospects in big cities.⁵²

Taken together, China’s recent

efforts to abolish the hukou system are substantial in ambition though calculated and conservative in practice. Even more, these proposals remain unspecific, and fail to provide a comprehensive solution to the hukou problem.

To fill the remaining policy

“The overarching theme of Premier Li’s policy proposal mirrored President Xi’s vision for China’s economic reform: gradual liberalization.”

gaps and provide less ambiguity, the Chinese government might pursue three categories of reform: easing, reforming, and eliminating. More specifically, I propose easing urban hukou permits on selective criteria: gradually reforming labor laws to give more protection to migrant labor; and eliminating the social and political barriers to public services. Local governments should start the process of easing hukou reform by selectively granting urban residency to rural laborers based on length of residency and family composition. While selective granting currently occurs, decisions are determined by the wealth of the individual, limiting only the richest to receive urban hukou. A better approach would grant rural holders urban hukou based on time of residence in cities, thus prioritizing migrants

50. Dexter Roberts, “China Moves on Reforming Hukou?” *Bloomberg*, June 28, 2013.

51. Zhang, “China Focus: Hukou reforms to help 100 mln Chinese.”

52. Feng et al., “Long run trends in unemployment and labor force participation in urban China.”

with long-term prospects for settlement. Likewise, urban hukou registration should prioritize families with children, ending the routine custom of parents leaving their children in the countryside to find work in the city. This practice carries significant social costs, namely, a generation of children, who are termed the 'left-behind children.' They are affected by depression, anxiety, and lack of opportunity.

This policy change has several benefits. The party will maintain control over the process, establishing a decree of party legitimacy over the social change, while easing the opposition from lodged interest in maintaining strict rural-urban divide. In time, impetus for further reform will build as hukou granting becomes the norm, a feature of modern urban life. Second, focusing on households will bring families together in cities. Compared to individuals, households are more economically stable, carry broad social benefits, and spend more on consumption. Therefore, hukou reform, beginning with centralized leadership, will lead a progressive trend towards greater social cohesion.

Ending discriminatory legal practices is the next step for hukou reform. Currently, the conditions of labor for rural migrants are characterized by low wages, wage arrears, lack of contracts, and long hours.⁵³ In short, rural laborers have no bargaining power against their main employers in the industrial sector, which creates a power dynamic abetted by laws favoring industrial interests. A study from the China's Ministry of Labor and Social Security in 2004 revealed that on average, only 12.5 percent of rural migrant laborers hold contracts with their employers.⁵⁴ Therefore, policies that give legal representation to rural laborers, in addition to improving access to better jobs, are the next logical steps.

Such a policy requires updating the legal framework for urban employment to give rural laborers greater leverage with their employer. This will make both parties responsible for improving work conditions and compensation, while reigning in flagrant abuses of labor rights in the industrial sector. This approach brings into line the party's objective of market-based structural reform, where liberalizing labor laws will raise the value of labor. Valid hukou reform in the long term is incumbent on curbing the abundant demand for cheap labor. The long-term effect of these changes would increase social mobility of rural workers, where higher wages and opportunity to enter the skilled workforce will improve migrants' standard of living. A wealthier blue-collar class and a service sector class would drive consumer spending, aligning hukou liberalization with China's future economic model. With prudent government policies, the low-skill industrial workforce of today could become the dynamic service or high-tech manufacturing sector of tomorrow.

Last, and most critical, is eliminating barriers that prevent rural migrants from accessing public services. While a predominant fear of the urban class is the rural underclass over-burdening public services, these entitlements must be provided to all urban citizens. Channeling government spending into social services is a valuable opportunity to invest in future generations. Not only will providing a welfare net incur greater spending on household consumption, investments in education will reap future dividends. Spreading the benefits inherent in healthcare, education, and retirement plans will ensure social stability, especially when market-oriented

53. Giles, *Expanding Social Insurance Coverage in Urban China*.

54. Research Office Project Team, State Council, *Research Report on Rural Migrant Workers* 2006: p. 13.

reforms might lead to higher unemployment. Moreover, redirecting government spending from low-return infrastructure projects into household spending will jumpstart a dormant consumer class.

However, the immediate implications of China's restructuring face formidable headwinds. An appreciating yuan, the halt of excessive state spending, and the closure of wasteful State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) factories, directly impacts the workers of the so-called 'world's factory.' The compounding effects of unemployment with rising costs of living from currency appreciation will a period of economic transition not geared towards rural laborers in cities. Therefore, it is necessary for immediate structural reforms to make the Chinese economy work for more citizens.⁵⁵ China's economic rebalancing would be undermined if the scales of economic and political power tilt towards the elite alone, because inequality will only breed instability. Thus, eliminating barriers to full citizenship, education, and employment will unleash an untapped economic and social force. As China approaches a turning point in the decade long period of double-digit growth, shifts towards a sustainable economic model will redefine the role of rural migrant labor in society. At this inflection point China's leaders should decide whether an economy built on a subclass is stable, or if it embodies the "China dream" of prosperity for all.

Cheap labor is no longer a viable economic growth model for Shandong. While this formula guarantees high output growth, it is done at a significant cost and further deepens long term social, environmental, and economic problems. For this reason, Shandong, like the rest of China's provinces, is undergoing a turning point in how its economy is structured. The country has reached a turning point,

and must now redefine its comparative advantage from cheap, inexhaustible labor, to a highly educated and productive workforce. The lives of many Chinese citizens will change dramatically as China emerges as the largest economy in the 21st century. In the case of Shandong, this means pivoting to a robust middle class, where greater latitude is given to policy makers, employers, and citizens to author their future.

The bellwether for China's successful rebalancing begins with an expansion of Shandong's middle class. It is with policy reforms towards better education and opportunities that this vision for China's 21st century will become reality.⁵⁶ Hukou reforms will accelerate this trend, changing how society transforms into a more equitable economy.

Article Edited by Rachel Pollard

Nicholas Steele is a senior at the University of Washington, majoring in International Studies at the Jackson School. He has studied abroad in Beijing several times and speaks fluent Mandarin. He currently works as an intern for US Senator Patty Murray and is applying to law school this summer. This essay was first drafted for JSIS 435, Industrialization and Urbanization in China, taught by Kam Wing Chan, a leading scholar on China's urban development.

55. Kam Wing Chan. "Urbanization and the Chinese Dream," *Cixin*. June 13 2013.

56. Zhang et al., "The Rise of the Middle Class in the People's Republic of China."

Q&A with Duzen Tekkal

January 31, 2017

*Duzen Tekkal is a journalist and human rights activist. Her Kurdish-Yazidi origin has inspired her human rights efforts in the region and led to the creation of H.A.W.A.R. Help, of which she is now the current chairwoman. In Germany, her journalism includes reporting for German TV stations and reporting independently. Her book, **Germany Is In Danger: Why We Have To Fight For Our Values** (Piper, 2016), became a bestseller in Germany this past year. She was recently invited to speak at the United Nations. Most recently, she created a documentary film, "Hawar- My Journey to Genocide" which has been screening throughout the nation. The film follows the events of the genocide on Iraq's Yazidi minority.*

Journal: How did your family dynamics and your childhood lead you to where you are today?

Tekkal: I think a very important role model was my father. When I was four years old, he took me to the German Parliament and said, "Look how important that is. This is about human rights and about our rights here in Germany. Now, we live in safety." At that time, my father was a refugee in Germany. He came from Turkey because he was Yazidi. It was very difficult to live there. That is what ISIS is doing to our people now. It was something that happened very often and something that we were used to. What my father wanted to tell me was that we have to use our possibilities and that we have to be educated. At that time, he said, "I would like to have you be a journalist or a politician to tell the story of your people."

Journal: What's your educational background?

Tekkal: I studied politics and German literature. I wrote about the Yazidi issue, migration subjects, and about integrative politics. I'm working as a crisis reporter, and as a journalist, for many politicians. For example, I wrote a book, and I found out just in the last two days that it is a bestseller!

Journal: Congratulations! What is the title of your book?

Tekkal: It is called **Germany Is In Danger: Why We Have To Fight For Our Values** (Piper, 2016). I'm talking about the evil twins; the racists on one hand, and the Islamic extremists on the other hand. What I would like to say with this book is that we have to stitch ourselves back together. We have to be louder than the other ones, and we have to come out of our comfort zone. Without going and seeing what happened to my people in this ongoing genocide, this book wouldn't be possible. When I saw what happened to people when they lost their rights and

when they are being attacked because of another religion, I have to tell what I saw there. I have to give a warning and make clear to other societies that this is something not far away from our life here, in the US or in Europe. We have to deal with this together.

Journal: Was there a specific moment that you can remember that inspired or motivated you to go to Iraq?

Tekkal: The combination of being Yazidi and being a journalist didn't give me another chance. The special moment was the telephone call that I got. I saw some pictures. It began with social media, so no newspapers were talking about this. They didn't know what happened. It was far away from the people because they were in fear. Our problem was that our people were attacked by [ISIS]. So, it was not possible to look away. And then, I get a phone call from Iraq, when our people said to us, "You have to come here. No one is interested in what is happening to us." So, I got a lot of emails and calls from Germany, Iraq, and Syria to make it clear that I had to go there. And I said to myself, "This will be easy to go there." It was a life changing moment for me and I slept very badly that night, but I knew that I had to go there because for me, there was no second possibility at that time.

Journal: What was it like traveling with your father?

Tekkal: I was ambivalent. I felt safe because I knew my father was there and this is the kind of mentality that you need; a man thinks like that. On

one hand, coming to Iraq was like coming as enemies of war, but on the other hand, it was coming home. So, it was both of them, together with my father. At first when he said, "I would like to come with you," I was against it and I said what should I do there with you? This is the most dangerous journey of my life, please stay home." But now, I'm so happy that he said, "No, you have to take me because this is our story, together. It is mutual." The fear that I had for my father, I did not have for myself. For example, there were times when we were together with the anti-ISIS fighters, there was one day where I knew it would be dangerous, and my father said, "When do we stand up today?" And I said, "No, you can sleep. You can just take some pictures, make some connections." But, I was lying. I went to the frontline and I didn't want to make my father come with me. When I came back, I thought everything was going fine. So, I told my father, "Papa, I went there." He asked why I didn't tell him. So, we had to take care of ourselves, on the one hand. But we also gave each other so much unbelievable power. You can't imagine how a human being can work in such a special situation. You're like a machine. I'm always saying that a war situation makes you very clear, very functional, and very honest. It's just trust. It's about all or nothing. Therefore, it was very interesting for me to learn more about what we are as human beings, and what we are able to do. I couldn't sleep in this war situation. While I was lying there, I typed the names of places we were in to Google. Then I thought, "Oh my God!" It said ISIS was everywhere.

Expert Insights

When I came to the Arab Hill, we had to pass on the routes through Mosul and on the same streets where the Toyotas from the ISIS fighters were driving. I cannot describe that feeling. These are the kinds of feelings which are unspeakable. This realization of the danger comes much later than at the moment you are there. At that moment, I felt like a machine. I had a mission, I had to take it, and I had to make it. Later, I was overcome with emotional feelings.

Journal: How do you feel about how your trip and your film transformed into a much greater project?

Tekkal: When I came back, all that we had done came from the base. We didn't have anything. We didn't have possibilities; we didn't have networks. To be honest, we didn't have the money at that time. When I went, I took money from my father and the bank to go. So, I think if you believe in something, you have to risk something. It was that kind of moment. When I came back, I talked about what happened there and the news outlets were very interested because I had gone to a place where they had never filmed before. After I came back many other journalists went there, but at that moment, I was the only one in Germany. I was invited by a big television broadcast station, one of the biggest and largest broadcast stations. I was sitting there, talking about what happened, and talking about my documentary. And then one by one, it became bigger. I met a producer and my problem was that it was not possible to sell the rights

to my project because this was not just a documentary; it was the story of my life. Therefore, I said, "There is no possibility that you can buy the rights." I had no money, but I'm very happy that I didn't make the decision to sell in that situation because I soon met a producer who understood my real feelings. And he said, "I would like you to finish this documentary because it's important for humanity. When you finish it, we'll give you what you need." And this is what happened to us on the other side; even with the genocide, there was solidarity and laughter from people that I never saw before. If you need help, then people will help you. But you have to ask for help. That was something which was going on every day. So, we have people who are against us, and who are fighting against us. But then we have the other side that is so powerful and full of solidarity and stands behind us, especially the Jewish community and the American Jewish community, as well. Then it becomes bigger, bigger, bigger, and we did not expect that this would become global. So, we knew that this was something very important, but we were not able to translate it into English, so as you see, my English is not very good with what I am trying to do, but if there's something I have to do, I will do it. I'm sure when we will see each other, six months later, it will be much better. But sometimes, life doesn't offer education. You have to do it. When we got this invitation from the US, Canada, and the UK, we said, okay, now we have to do the same thing as we achieved in Germany. Our way to spread the word is by becoming international. I think one important

point was our invitation to the United Nations a few months ago. That changed a lot for us. This is what we are looking for now; to make a network, to look for volunteers. In Germany, we noticed that we met so many inspiring people, like you, who are saying, we would like to be a part of what you are doing because it's all about humanity. This is something that I found. There are so many gay and lesbian people around us, because they said, we love what you are doing because you're doing something for minorities. But, you achieve the majority with your causes. And I think we have something for everyone. There's no one who cannot talk with us, even Muslims. If they are interested, please come. Of course, we can do something. And this is something, one of my main points. We have to fight for the secular Muslims and we cannot play with these pictures of enemies, otherwise, we are not much better than the other ones.

Journal: You discussed the main purpose of your NGO is to share people's stories. What are its other purposes and what are your goals?

Tekkal: Two things. One is our work in Iraq with the resettlement programs, especially for the women. This gender issue is very important for us because women still don't have any rights and the role of the Yazidi women is better than those of Islamic women, but we still have to fight. We will make it possible for women to be educated, independent, and earn their own money. There are some interesting programs with the development minister in Germany, which we became

a part of. The second thing is fighting for child soldiers. They are very important to me, the kids and the women who escaped from ISIS. There are thousands who are still in the hands of ISIS. This is something that makes me very upset because I knew a lot of them and we created some support programs for them in Germany. The ones who come, they come to forget what happened to them and to be well educated by mentors (people who have a lot of money and don't know what to do with it and make something with sentiment). I think both of them need each other. The one who has everything wants to have an impact in his life, and the one who has nothing needs money for his education. What we are trying to do is bring people together. The other thing is discovering our project. I think sports can open hearts and minds. It doesn't depend on where you are; it's about who you are. I think this is very important. Also, we are planning a program between Holocaust survivors and ISIS survivors. For example, we met Roman Kent, who is a Holocaust survivor in New York. There will be a time when the last Holocaust survivor will be dead. I think we have to remember what happened at that time and how that happened. This is one of our important aims. It doesn't come from the heavens. There was a scene of enemies who made something in humanity possible and horrible. This is something which we can't forget, we must remember. We are going to schools to give talks about what happened at that time, to talk to students and young people. You can't understand genocide in books. You have to humanize these events by telling

the stories of the people who went through this genocide. As a translator, this is a medium. As a journalist and a documentary filmmaker, my mission is to translate these experiences and make the people feel what that really means, to be in an ongoing genocide or to be traded. What I think is very important is to know that from the base level, not from the books. I have my education, but what we are doing now is our homework and we are at the ground level working directly with people. I'm not a professor who is telling you to do this, I want to make it realistic and an experience. I'm trying to bring the words, the images, and the books together. They are very important for Yazidis. But, you need all of them. I think our cause is making films and talking about it.

Journal: Last night, you mentioned the psychological trauma of Yazidis, and that it's not enough to take someone in, but to help them deal with the psychological trauma they have experienced. How have you dealt with this situation?

Tekkal: This is another goal of mine. They can't forget what happened to them. You have to be sensitive and understand their words, their honor, their religion. We became responsible because we are Yazidis. We are German Yazidis, but we know both worlds, both languages, and both feelings. For example, when the mother of a child soldier was crying and talking about what happened to her, I'm trying to bring her to laugh. When it works, I'm happy! This is very important work for Yazidi women as role models. This power

is very important for them; they need to realize that they are accepted and are helping us. They became brave and they give us braveness. For example, I told a story at the United Nations about when I met Sherin. I told stories about people, not numbers. For example, one of my friends, Sherin, was in the hands of ISIS for about two years. I always tried to motivate her, give her some power, and to understand her and to make her laugh. You can have this intercultural competence without being taught this religion. In this particular case, it was necessary to understand the background.

Journal: Have you considered returning to Iraq?

Tekkal: Of course! When I get back to Germany, three weeks later I will go to Iraq again. We have to go there. Otherwise we will lose contact and our work. Our work is not just going to politicians. We have to stay in contact with both worlds. Otherwise, it won't work. Also, as a journalist, I need the street-smartness. I need the street credibility. I need to talk to the people there to make sense of change and to translate something. This is a real challenge because there are so many people who invited us. We are not able to say yes to everyone. We must mix being with both groups. Of course, our project is paid for, but I'm an idealist and I feel like we have to do all these ideas. But then, I realize we have to pay for it. My book, for example, what I earned, I took all of it and put it into my NGO. But, I want to make it possible for people to help us because we are doing this for society, not for

us. We are doing it for a better world. What I have learned, in this case, is that Americans are very generous and open, and they love action. The question is always, what can we do? I love this way of living. In Germany, it is much more complicated. You have to talk a lot. Right now, we are in a situation in which we can cry for help and say we need these things. The people know us and they know what we are doing. They know that they can trust us. So this was the biggest aim for me in this past year. This year, it must be to be pragmatic, to fundraise and gain donations, and to go on with our work.

Journal: For students interested in human rights, and interested in international affairs, what advice do you have?

Tekkal: The most important advice I have is to go there, to work there, and to stay in contact. Your future is very clear. You will follow and you will go on. Don't forget the other people. Stay sensitive and feel the responsibility for other human beings. If people want to work in these fields, I think they have to go there. Not just for the big NGOs, but maybe try to understand. I think that if you want to help, you will find a way to help. If you feel like this is something that you will work on, then try to do that. From personal experience, like I've said, I had such a strong feeling about this work, and I was inspired by my father. It inspired my whole life. I had some great professors who I never forgot. You have some really cool professors here. This university is like paradise. It's

great, you have all the chances. Don't forget that there is another world. I know that you don't forget that. Try to give something back from this good life, which we have. Do good things and work on creating a better world. In times like this, it's more important than ever to do these things. Tragedies and crises are big chances for young people to act, to stand up again, to fight for something, feel a sentiment towards something, and to know why you are studying here. We need these kinds of people for our world.

Interview by Isabel Nelson & Rachel Pollard

Q&A with Vanessa Freije

May 4, 2017

Vanessa Freije is an Assistant Professor of International Studies at the University of Washington. Previously, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Dartmouth College Society of Fellows. She received her PhD in History from Duke University. Her research and teaching focus on the history of Mexico, specifically the role journalists have in regional development and the politics of knowledge production. Freije's dissertation, "Journalists, Scandal, and the Unraveling of the One-Party Rule in Mexico, 1960-1988" won numerous awards including the Latin American Studies Association Mexico Dissertation, the Award for the best dissertation on Mexico in the social sciences and humanities, and the Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize. She is currently working on a book manuscript about the relationship between scandal and democracy.

Jackson School Journal: What sparked your interest in the history of Mexico and Mexican-American relations?

Vanessa Freije: I'm originally from San Diego, so growing up I saw just how connected the US and Mexico were. I had friends whose parents lived in Tijuana and I visited their families on the weekends; people with family members who worked in San Diego, but who lived in Mexico. I think I became interested by virtue of living in that environment, seeing and wanting to understand the histories of these interconnections. I could see the contemporary ramifications and wanted to understand the backdrop of that.

Journal: How did this growing interest lead to your current research? What led you from your interest in this topic to seriously exploring these topics in your education?

Freije: My current topic arose through random circumstances that introduced me to new topics and ideas. I wrote an honors thesis in college which exposed me to the research process, and in the course of researching I ended up studying Mexican history. The US-Mexico aspect ended up being less significant to my research, ironically, but my honors thesis made me realize I am actually willing to dedicate hours and hours to writing and reading about very specific things. After graduating, I moved to Oaxaca and worked with a public health organization. That move made me realize I really enjoyed working abroad and liked that aspect of the research process. That's what brought me to graduate school.

Journal: You have a background in researching the role of journalists in development. Can you talk more about that and your findings?

Freije: My book project is about political scandals in Mexico, since the late 1960s. I'm interested in understanding how political scandals do or do not reshape ideas of democracy. We have this idea that political scandals expose political wrongdoing, like corruption scandals, or things that come out in the media that uncover how the state is doing things they should not be doing. The media's role in most countries is the so-called "watchdog" that then lets the public know that these scandals are happening. In Mexico's case, what we see is the rise of scandals and the media's ability to expose them. But, Mexico's process of democratization didn't necessarily bring all the rights that one would associate with full-fledged democracy. What I was trying to understand was, how can there be this incredible openness in the press, but also these minimal effects on democratization that would normally result from these scandals? For example, one person will be fired but institutional changes aren't actually put in place. My book is trying to explain those contradictions and understand what to make of them. I think part of what I'm finding is that this is an inherent weakness of the media itself. Exposure doesn't necessarily mean more openness in politics. Often times these exposures can be motivated by people within the regime who have political enemies.

Journal: Was there anything surprising or anything that stuck with you after you finished your dissertation?

Freije: I wrote the dissertation thinking this would be about how media contributed to Mexico's democracy,

and in part I did find that. But I also found that media contributes to the perpetuation of certain types of models of development. That was one of the unexpected findings. In terms of the research process, I ended up working a lot in journalists' private archives, which was something that I didn't expect to do at all. That happened through interviewing people and eventually receiving access to their sources. What I learned from that experience is how important it is, even as a historian who really likes to work in documents and archives, to talk to people because that often yields really interesting sources.

Journal: Your dissertation was recognized with several awards, and you built upon it with this book manuscript. What is your goal with this project and how did it expand from your dissertation to what it is now?

Freije: Well, the final book is in progress. I guess its full expansion is yet to be determined. I talked in part about how some of the questions that are underpinning the book derive from the unexpected findings of my dissertation. I'm adding two more chapters, and that's just the nitty gritty, to make it a longer story. But I had to think about how to change a dissertation into a book. A lot of that is considering who the audience is and trying to make it broader, and thinking about students actually being assigned it in classes. That's something I've been thinking as I'm revising: where might this be assigned? What kind of conversations can intervene in a way that a dissertation just cannot catalyze? I have ended up doing more research

as part of the work on the book. Now I am just writing it up and hopefully submitting it by the end of summer [2017].

Journal: What kind of audiences are you considering?

Freije: It could definitely be in seminars about censorship or thinking about how media operates in the global south, for example. It could be in survey courses about Latin America or Mexico. And I think, hopefully, also in classes on development, since I think part of what I am writing about is how media works in governance and becomes a channel for how civil society groups can express demands.

Journal: I'm curious how you see your research in the current American situation with the media, and how that plays a role in governance. Do you have any insight into that?

Freije: It's really interesting if you think about today, as we can see some of these problems of scandals actually playing out. For example, in the current American administration, in the last one hundred days - which we've all been made very aware of with all the press about the one-hundred-day milestone - how much media drives the conversation about what's happening and how much political or social movements rely on media to expose certain problems and generate interest. In this case, what we've been seeing is when media is moving on to a new issue every day, it diminishes to some degree the anger and mobilization around any particular issue because

in part, political elites who have to respond to scandals are responding to the public pressure. Clearly, most elites who are politicians do not want to deal with media attention and scandals; they do not want their hand forced during a scandal. In this moment, we're seeing that by moving from issue to issue there can be a paralyzing effect, in the sense that it doesn't allow anyone the time to support or become angry to drive the one issue home.

Journal: Transitioning from talking about your research to being a professor: what do your classes mostly focus on in the University?

Freije: This is my first year at UW and I taught a class on censorship, which was global in scope. I also taught a class on US-Latin American relations and a survey course on Mexico. In the future, I'll be teaching required core courses for graduate students about religion, culture, and civilization, as well as JSIS 202 for undergrads. It's fun thinking about culture in different contexts, and how culture shapes our understanding of politics and the global economy.

Journal: What are your next steps? Where do you see yourself in a few years?

Freije: I'll be coming up for tenure eventually, and I'd like to develop new courses as well. I would like to start teaching a course on drug policy in Latin America and drugs in the Americas, thinking about how the circulation from the US through Latin America happens and what are the cultural afterlives of that trade. You've just invited me to be

on the advisory board of the Jackson School Journal, which is cool. So I'm hoping to get involved in more things that students are doing in the school. I think that's something really fun and interesting about the Jackson School and unique, especially compared to other departments on campus and other schools around the country.

Journal: What advice do you have for students looking to go on to higher education, like you did, or even possibly becoming a professor at a university?

Freije: To become a professor at a university, I would say that you want to make sure there's something you're willing to study for fifteen years. If you become obsessed with a topic and you cannot stop thinking about it or you are continually going down a rabbit hole of new research, then a university career could be one for you. Then you just have to figure out ways to feed that habit. I think if you have that, the other stuff will fall in place, but you have to have the willingness to dedicate time to research.

Interview by Emily Ferguson & Rachel Pollard

Q&A with Valerie Mueller

October 20, 2017

Valerie Mueller is an Assistant Professor in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. She is also a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institution and a co-leader of the Development Strategy and Governance Division. Her research focuses on rural household vulnerability in relation to climate variability. She also looks at how the delivery of rural services in east African countries have to be improved. She received her BS in Environmental Economics and Policy from Berkeley. She attended the University of Maryland, College Park where she received her MS and PhD in Agricultural and Resource Economics.

Jackson School Journal: What inspired your interest in environmental economics and policy?

Valerie Mueller: When I was an undergrad at Berkeley, I knew I wanted to do something with economics because I was really into math and statistics. At the time, I was very interested in the water crisis between Israel and Palestine, and a lot of the solutions to the problems there were being developed by environmental economists. Then, I thought, maybe this is the field I should get myself into because I can apply math to some solutions related to water scarcity in the Middle East. At the same time, as an undergrad, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school because I really enjoyed going to college. I wouldn't call myself the model student in high school or before. I wasn't really studious, but when I went to college, suddenly I opened a new door and realized that learning can actually be

fun. I decided I did not want to stop after four years, I wanted to pursue a graduate degree. Once I understood that I wanted to work on environmental economics, I started talking to my professors about what the next stage of schooling might look like. I started meeting a lot of graduate students that were in the graduate version of our program at Berkeley and asking them what classes I should take. I also had a research assistantship with one of the professors, where I got paid to actually work on research. It was a lot of fun and I started to really enjoy the field. I made sure to take classes that would prepare me for a PhD program, and asked my professor which programs I should consider. "I'm interested in international environmental economics, specifically in developing countries. Are there certain programs that you recommend I should apply to?"

Journal: Were there any particular impactful things that you did as an

undergrad that sparked your graduate research and work?

Mueller: Yeah, as I mentioned before, my initial interest was in the water crisis in the Middle East. At the time, there was a grad student giving a seminar for undergraduates, and there were about three or four of us on this particular topic. We would read a bunch of articles and discuss what the research in this particular area was looking like. Outside of economics, my degree was pretty interdisciplinary in that I had a lot of space to take other kinds of classes, so I started taking political science classes and Middle Eastern studies classes. I just really wanted to know the region and understand the geopolitical context of the water scarcity problem. At that point I knew this is what I wanted to work on and I wanted to write a dissertation about it. However, I must say that, once I got to graduate school, that is not what I ended up working on. Once I was there, things really changed, but it was out of an interest in a particular topic and a particular field that motivated me to go to graduate school and work on those topics in the first place.

Journal: Can you talk about the research you are doing?

Mueller: I have two projects related to women and rural service delivery. One is in Tanzania. Basically, what we want to do is to deal with a problem in East Africa occurring with widows and orphans. When the dad or husband is gone, the land of that household often gets confiscated by extended family members. Even if you were a wife to

the man and you were working on that land, once your husband passes away, that land is going to be taken. A lot of these women don't know what kind of rights they have to the land, including not necessarily releasing the land to the husband's family members. Especially in rural communities, because they're so far from the judicial system, women don't know what the laws are, and everything is based on community practices. In response, there are some NGOs creating voluntary paralegals in communities. Essentially, you train a community member to know what the land rights are of anyone, whether a woman or a man. You also train them on how to mediate disputes within the village. These could be disputes aside from land, like a domestic dispute, for example. They can help diffuse conflicts between a husband and wife. Or, if there are issues with domestic separation, there are a lot of things to discuss regarding who's going to stay in the house, who's going to take care of the child, etc. In our research, we wanted to see if this kind of program actually had any impact on women's rights to land: whether women's attitudes changed regarding their rights to land, whether their knowledge about what their legal rights changed regarding the legislation, and then whether there were different practices surrounding land altogether. If a paralegal was in the village, are women more likely to have the authority to make decisions within the household or not? Whether they have more authority to make decisions within the household or not?

We didn't see huge changes in attitudes because of the paralegal program,

though. It was a dud evaluation, but part of that is because, (I mean the way we rationalize why this program might not have worked) we were only observing the change in outcomes over one year, and it is really hard to change social norms in one year. Ideally, it would have been good to study after it had been in place for five years. Unfortunately, often times we don't have that luxury, because donors that are funding this program want to know the answers right away.

We had another study, which did not deal with legal justice. It was a study in Mozambique. The Ministry of Agriculture has what's called an "Agricultural Extension Program." Agricultural extension is basically when you have people getting paid within the government to teach farmers how to use the latest technologies, as well as more sustainable practices. A lot of the dissemination of agricultural practices happens through this. These people act as a "teacher" to farmers. You have teachers for kids, and you have teachers for farmers. The whole process relies on extension agents going and visiting farmers in different villages. The problem is that there's a lot of bottlenecks that can happen where the agricultural extension agents don't visit all of the farmers. Essentially, what we wanted to see was, first, there's an extension model that is very common in developing countries where it is impossible for the extension agent to teach all farmers. What they do because of this is they go to one community and they try and teach what could be called the 'lead farmer'. The effectiveness of this model relies on that farmer sharing information with

other members of the same community. The idea is that, I'm just going to teach one person, and you go and tell everyone what I have taught you. This person, the 'lead farmer', is always a male. What we wanted to question was what would happen if we ensure that the extension agent shares information with a head female in the community. It is important for us that women can learn this information too because a lot of them are managing land on their own. Therefore, what would happen if we require that the agents train women as well? We found that only in the case when have a situation where the extension agent talks to a female head farmer in the community, do other women in the community get the information. When you just focus on the male head in the community, you see some people don't benefit from this program. They don't share a lot of that information with their peers, and if they do, they're only sharing it with other men. It is only in the case where you are going to a powerful role model for women in the community that other female farmers in the community are getting that information. So basically what that suggests is that there's this huge gender bias in rural service delivery and that needs to be solved. You can't expect an extension agent to motivate other female farmers, that there is a cultural barrier that needs to be resolved.

Journal: Are the extension agents almost entirely male?

Mueller: Yeah, there have been some studies that have tried to explore with changing the role whether the

extension agents are male or female. You know, they're qualitative studies and that seems to be important.

Journal: What drove you to the East African region for your research?

Mueller: Before I joined ASU, I was at IFPRI, The International Food and Policy Research Institute, for nine years. I was at the Earth Institute at Columbia before that, and so my background before going into IFPRI was working on Brazil. IFPRI are known for a lot of work in East Africa. So I was pushed into working in Ethiopia and from there, I suddenly became an expert in East Africa. But a lot of that, except Mozambique, is because some of these countries speak English, versus working in West Africa you need to know French. Some of the reasons why we don't focus on countries are due to the native language.

Journal: What technical skills do you think have helped you the most?

Mueller: I'm an economist, so my technical skills are that I did take a lot of math, I did take calculus, I took linear algebra and linear equations. And that was helpful as I went to graduate school. I did take some statistics and econometrics classes. But that's if you want to work in the field of economics. If you still are interested in international development, you don't necessarily need to be an economist. There are all sorts of different disciplines that work on these issues. As an economist, you have to take a little bit more of math and stats, than you would of some of the other disciplines.

Journal: As an undergrad pursuing environmental economics and natural resources without a background in environmental science, it can be challenging to find opportunities in research and the fields of consulting/management. How do you navigate the environmental field coming from a background grounded in policy?

Mueller: I would say my professors never really had that expectation. But they did want us to take biology and some environmental classes. That's just part of the nature of the major. Going forward, it helps to have a little bit of knowledge of the science aspect, but what we're doing is working with the scientists who are the experts in this. They explain enough to us, enough that we need to know to understand how to solve it from the behavioral side. You just need to know a little bit but not be an expert.

Journal: How has being a woman in economics impacted your experience?

Mueller: There was a paper done by an undergraduate at Berkeley, who coded all the responses. We have a website called the Econ Job Market Rumor Website, where people go to get information if they're on the job market. Basically there's this unspoken understanding that women are very much discriminated against in the field of economics. For me, it was really important to have very strong mentors. Not just women mentors, but also male mentors who understood how important it was to help women climb the ranks. It's one thing just to get a PhD. They try to give everyone

an equal opportunity to get the PhD. But to be successful, it's beyond just the dissertation. Social networks and contacts are really important as well. Being given some of these opportunities allows you to get further in your career. I owe a lot to a post-doctoral supervisor. He was a great mentor and very accommodating. There are certain things that women go through that men don't have to, and I think it's important to have people understand that it's not necessarily a weakness to have children and be married. That's a very strong social norm that needs to be changed because that's just expected of you that you have no personal or social life.

Journal: Have you tried to integrate these experiences into your research? You mentioned that you targeted female farmers instead of men.

Mueller: Gender is something I care about a lot. Personally, I'm an immigration expert, but with IFPRI, we had a bunch of research because what we were doing was demand driven. I would say something that I'm very passionate about is how to empower women economically. A lot of the studies I still work on are related to how to empower women or what are the limitations they're facing in these developing country contexts.

Journal: Was it harder working in these developing countries as a woman?

Mueller: I think it depends on the country. I would say that in Africa, it wasn't. Some of these places have ministers who are women. It's a lot more

progressive than here. I don't think being a woman made it very difficult to conduct my fieldwork or anything like that. There are some subtleties that will happen in the developing country context. For example, my colleague will be a doctor. Smith and I, even though we both have a Ph.D., will be called by our first names. There's just some cultural things that are hard to change, but for the most part in East Africa, it wasn't so challenging.

Journal: For undergraduate students interested in your area of research and policy, what advice can you offer?

Mueller: It would be great to try to get an internship in DC or elsewhere, an experience of what it's like to work in the policy world. My advice would be to try to branch out of Seattle. It's one thing to do it on paper and study it. It can sound as interesting as reading a novel. You get to study whatever you want, that's a complete luxury. Right now, this might be interesting for you, but if you want to pursue a career in this, I have to say, it is another story. Getting an internship in DC can help see if that's what you want to pursue afterward. Also reaching out to other people, like myself. Not necessarily people in academia, but people at the World Bank or people in an NGO and get a sense, do they have the quality of life, are they doing the kinds of things you think are interesting.

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